

TEACHING CASE STUDY

DIAMOND OF THE DESERT: THE CASE OF QATAR'S 2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

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Abstract

For the first time in the Arab world, the FIFA World Cup in Qatar 2022 was one of the main drivers for promoting important infrastructural changes in the country, as well as for transforming the image of Qatar in order to make the destination more attractive to foreign tourists. However, despite the great wealth from its Oil & Gas reserves, several social challenges that historically affect the country began to emerge due to greater coverage of the international media, threatening the expectations of positive legacies left on the country's image from the event. Given this context, the case puts the reader in the role of Ahmed Al-Nasr, then Chairman of the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, as he faces different pressures made by major international brands sponsoring the event who now see their image threatened by successive controversies that the country has been involved in and they are threatening to withdraw their support and investments. The case is indicated for undergraduate and graduate students of courses in the area of Tourism, Sport Management, and Business interested in discussing topics and concepts related to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) responsibility, management of mega events, international marketing, and country destination image.

Keywords ESG, Mega Sporting Events, Destination Image, FIFA World Cup.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an election held in the city of Zurich on December 2, 2010, Qatar — a small country in the Persian Gulf with around 2.7 million people — was chosen to host the International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) World Cup for the year 2022 after defeating other strong candidates such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States. The event, which would take place for the first time in a country in the Arab world, was considered by experts in the field and also by FIFA authorities as an event of “high operational risk”¹ (ESPN 2010), precisely because of all the differences that a non-democratic country that has Islam as its official religion has especially with Western cultures, which is the region where these types of competition usually occur. To have an idea, until that moment, out of all the 19 Cups that have taken place, only South Korea

and Japan in 2002 and South Africa in 2010 have been held outside of Europe or the Americas.

As the smallest country since Uruguay in 1930 to host a World Cup, Qatar knew from that moment that even having a longer time to develop the required infrastructure compared to previous hosts that a long journey would still need to be made in order to achieve the standards required to host what has become one of the biggest sporting events of the world. In addition to the challenge of investing in the construction of roads, railways, subway lines, ports, airports, stadiums and a whole tourist support structure such as hotels, restaurants and other tourist attractions, the country would also need to overcome the distrust from both western and Middle Eastern countries (Financial Times 2017) such as the United Arab Emirates, a regional competitor for the industry of tourism and events. Being successful in this task would enable Qatar not only to create a positive legacy bringing local socioeconomic development to the region, but also the possibility of building a destination brand to a global audience watching them at that time.

As already observed in previous editions, the intangible legacy (Griffin 2019), for the destination image may be one of the main reasons why countries apply to host international mega sporting events. Particularly in the case of Qatar, given that it is a microstate located in one of the regions of greatest tension in the world, being well seen and having good international relations is also a necessity for its political ambitions and national security strategy (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015). Its small territory, population, and modest army with a force of just 21,500 men have been compensated over the last decades by the country's activism in diplomacy and mediation of regional conflicts, as well as by its good commercial and political relations with the biggest powers of the world (Reiche 2015). Considering between 2008 and 2016 alone, Qatar was the protagonist of at least 10 significant mediations, placing the country at the center of dialogue for issues that culminated in the peace agreement for the Darfur region, the release of Djibouti war prisoners in Eritrea, prisoner releases in Syria, as well the management of the crisis after a vacuum in Lebanon's power. Alongside this, Qatar has also been one of the main articulators of the negotiations for reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians.

This strategy has been more recently reinforced by a national policy of hosting international events with the objective of bringing greater visibility to the region (Amara 2013). In this way, the 2022 FIFA World Cup project brought repercussions to Qatar that went far beyond the sporting context, being seen by high government officials as a breakpoint that would put Doha once and for all inside the modern Arab world (Figure 1) alongside Dubai and Abu Dhabi. One of the people responsible for fulfilling this task, Ahmed Al-Nasr, was appointed by the Emir as the Chairman of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, a local agency created in 2011 with the responsibility of overseeing the planning and delivery of the 2022 FIFA World Cup as well as other necessary support infrastructure for the event and post-event period (Qatar2022 2022). Al-Nasr knew, however, of the risk that the great international visibility brought by the World Cup could generate for a society still divided between tradition and modernity whose position on various controversial issues such as migrant rights, homosexuality, alcohol consumption and women's rights, among others were not very well accepted by the western world (Henderson 2014).

With the years of preparation and the proximity of the World Cup in 2022, the discomfort with Western culture has only increased. If on the one hand the high availability of resources from the oil & gas-based economy allowed that by mid-2021, about 500 days before the start of the World Cup, 95% of the infrastructure to host the event was already completed with only three stadiums still pending to be completed before the beginning of 2022, on the other hand the government of Qatar and the Organizing Committee itself had received increasing pressures from international companies responsible for sponsoring the event as well as from other international organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) itself to fulfill their goals for sustainable development and decent work. Although in previous years the country had tried to promote some reforms, much still needed to be done. In an attempt to release pressures amidst a critical moment for the project that was entering its final 12 months, Al-Nasr requested a meeting with some of the event's top sponsors in order to present the results already achieved as well expectations for the future. Al-Nasr wasn't sure, however, if he alone would be capable of calming down the spirits of everyone involved.

2. QATAR: THE DIAMOND OF THE DESERT

Located on the northeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula, Qatar is a small country with less than 12,000 km² and a population of 2.7 million people, mostly composed of migrants — around 90%. The country borders only Saudi Arabia in the south and Bahrain by the sea in the northwest, putting Qatar in one of the greatest stress regions in the world (Figure 2). Since the mid-19th century, the territory has been considered an emirate, governed by an absolutist and hereditary political system under the power of an Emir. After a long period of domination by the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century, in 1916 the region became a British protectorate, a relation that only ended in 1971 with its declaration of independence. Since then, after the discovery of large reserves of oil and natural gas (the third largest in the world), Qatar has become one of the richest countries in the region with an economy based essentially on the extraction and trade of these resources.

To get an idea of the country's wealth, Qatar was considered by Forbes Magazine as the richest country in the world for having the highest GDP per capita on the planet — twice as much as the United States. However, the high dependence on non-renewable resources such as oil has caused the country since the first decade of the 21st century to start thinking about a diversification strategy, already foreseeing in the long term a scenario of its natural reserves ending. Launched in October 2008 by the General Secretariat for Planning and Development, the National Vision of Qatar (QNV) 2030 was a huge development plan whose main objective was to promote the competitiveness of other sectors of the industry and attract foreign direct investment into the country. Through heavy investments in economic, social, human, and environmental development, Qatar intended to become a modern society within a few years through sustainable development, showing an alignment with many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (Figure 3).

This movement, which can also be observed in the same period in other Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait (Vision 3035), Saudi Arabia (Vision 2030), and the United Arab Emirates (Vision 2021), only reinforced a regional development strategy that was interested in promoting the image of these countries internationally, making the region a new hub for world tourism. In the case of Qatar, for infrastructure projects alone there was a plan to spend US\$ 200 billion with the 2022 FIFA World Cup as the main pillar of this project. By way of comparison, official numbers show that the last World Cup in Russia, until then considered the most expensive in history, had cost around US\$ 13 billion. Following the comparison, within the period comprehending its national vision project (2008-2030) alone, Qatar would be able to host a Russian Cup every 18 months.

The impressive numbers of the project do not stop there. In addition to building 4 new stadiums and renovating another 4 that already exist, with the main one having a capacity for 86,000 people, Qatar also intended to invest in developing an entire support infrastructure that would serve both the event and afterwards, of which we could highlight the new train and metro systems connecting all 3 host cities, increasing the capacity of Doha airport from 30 to 50 million passengers a year, building 240 new hotels with a focus on the 4 and 5 star categories (Living2022 2020), in addition to modernizing the port of Doha and building hotels, restaurants, and other tourist entertainment facilities. In addition, the country has maintained through its sovereign national fund several investments around the world such as the ownership of the football team Paris Saint-Germain and the master sponsorship of Barcelona FC through its airline Qatar Airways that has sponsoring as a declared foreign policy strategy (Georgetown University Qatar 2021), along with equity participation in the world's leading financial entities such as Barclays, Credit Suisse, and Harrods.

Along with the strategy of large internal and external investments since 2006 when Qatar hosted the Asian Games, the country has been betting on event tourism as one of the biggest promoters of its destination image. Over the years, the country has become a regional reference for corporate and leisure events with conferences, thematic fairs, festivals, in addition to, of course, sport competitions. Apart from the right to host the 2022 World Cup and the 2021 Arab Cup, in recent years the country has also had other experiences such as the Swimming World Cup (2014), Handball World Cup (2015), Road Cycling World Cup (2016), and the Gymnastics World Cup (2018) in addition to being part of the World Tennis, Golf, and MotoGP circuit every year. Up to March 2022, Qatar had 87 active ads for international events occurring between 2021 and 2022 on its official website (visitqatar.qa). Previously they had been a candidate for the 2016, 2020, and entered into dialogue phase for the 2032 Olympic Games (Inside The Games 2021), but ended up receiving some resistance due to broadcast timings and climate conditions imposed by its desert geography and temperatures, which can reach 45 °C in the summer.

Despite the promise of high investments in climate control technologies in stadiums and cities by the organizers, in 2014, FIFA fearing the impact of the high temperatures that hit the country during the months of June and July, ended up transferring the competition to November and December for the first time in history. The impacts of this change on the international broadcasting to the western audience, which now will no longer be “on vacation”, still need to be evaluated. The only certainty is that it will be possible to get full coverage of all matches through the 19 channels of the former Al Jazeera and now

beIN Sports TV (Alarabiya News 2020), a Doha-based broadcaster with a strong regional influence. In addition to the first air-conditioned stadiums in the world, there are likely to be many other improvements, especially with regard to the participation of its national team, who won the Asian Cup of 2019 (FIFA Ranking 2022), and is automatically classified for the tournament for being the hosts. Beyond this, part of Qatar's reputation strategy also involves high investments in both grassroots and high-performance sports, which have given the country the most advanced training centers in the world. According to the Qatar Financial Center (QFC), by 2022 the country intends to invest US\$ 20 billion in developing the local sports industry, which should generate the attraction of around 400 new multi-sector international companies with businesses in the sports market.

The strategy to attract foreign athletes to train and compete for the national teams becomes necessary mainly because of their low population. It is estimated that currently there are only about 270,000 native Qataris in the country, representing 10% of the total population. All the rest are migrants from around 100 other nationalities who often go to Qatar in search of job opportunities and high salaries. In the sports field, the naturalization strategy overused in the past has been gradually revised in order to prioritize the development of local athletes. Another reason for the aggressive policies to encourage national sports can also be explained in public health matters in a country that has one of the most obese populations in the world (Global Obesity Observatory 2022), where sedentary lifestyles are the biggest cause of death in the country. In the Qatari society, 37% of men and 48% of women were recorded as being obese, with the most commonly self-reported medical conditions being high cholesterol (30%), high blood pressure (17%), and diabetes (19%) of the population (Qatar Biobank 2022).

Despite this, the entire investment strategy in sport and mega events has brought positive results, above all for the national tourism industry, which until years ago was 95% based on business trips due to Qatar being a place without generally well-known natural attractions (I love Qatar 2020). Over the last decade, what has been observed in the country has been its number of international tourists increasing from 1 million in 2007 to 2.8 million in 2014 with an expectation of having 4 million in 2022, the year of the World Cup, and this number could reach up to 7.4 million by 2030, representing an annual growth of 20%. Clear examples of these efforts can also be seen in the country's sustainable development strategy, which has already announced that all 4 new World Cup stadiums will have their capacity reduced after the event or will be assembled from a temporary structure to be later dismantled and transformed into 22 multi-sport arenas (DW 2021). In order to avoid "white elephants", some of these facilities will be donated to emerging countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East so that they can promote the sport in these regions. Another contribution to the sustainability of the event is the fact that it is the most compact World Cup the world has ever seen with the most distant host city being just two hours by car from Doha, which makes travelling by plane unnecessary. This condition will considerably represent savings in the atmospheric impact.

All these investments currently make the country the largest construction site in the world. With these efforts, the local government hopes not only to attract international investment to the region, but also to achieve international recognition from western countries. In this sense, another important focus has been on promoting policies to

encourage health and education through technological development and innovation that have been responsible for bringing the world's leading universities to the country and along with them renowned foreign scientists who now develop their research locally. With all these efforts, Qatar hopes to follow global trends with a recipe that unites tradition, modernity, adherence to universal values, solidarity, human rights, and respect for cultural differences, thus making the country a meeting point between the East and West worlds.

3. UNCERTAINTIES AND MISTRUSTS FROM THE WESTERN WORLD

With the World Cup approaching in 2022, the eyes of the world, and especially the West, continue to be turned to Qatar. Despite all the country's efforts to modernize its society (Human Dignity Trust 2022), several uncertainties and mistrusts still hang over the way in which Qatar (and the region) has dealt with sensitive human rights issues, which directly affect some of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially regarding the principles that talk about poverty, health and social well-being, gender equality, working conditions, social inequality, and justice and institutions — issues that still have a lot to evolve in the country (Griffin 2017). If we think about Qatar's institutions, the first contrast is the non-democratic government regime that exists in the country. Beyond that, several advances still need to be seen in issues like the rights of “minorities” such as gender equality, criminalization of the LGBTQIA+ community, labor rights of migrant workers, among others.

Despite being a very rich country, it is still possible to observe comparative poverty in Qatar due to inequalities. This can be said because there are significant differences between the wages of migrant workers (over 90% of labor force) and Qatari nationals (around 10% of the population, but holders of the greatest wealth). The way in which this system unfolded over the years has greatly contributed toward generating significant social contrasts in a country that at the same time is highly dependent on this foreign workforce to promote its developmental transformations. Mostly from the poorer South Asian countries such as India, Nepal, Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, many of these workers leave their homes and families in search of better incomes and work opportunities in the domestic or construction fields. However, the country's labor system, known as the Kafala, or sponsorship regime, is primarily based on the contractual agreement between employer and employee. These contracts are backed by the labor and the law of residency. According to the International Labor Organization, one of the main problems of the regime, introduced by the British colonial authorities in the 1950s to regulate the entry of migrants into the Arab countries, is the fact that it transferred to the employer responsibilities that are normally the role of the government.

This system, referred to by *The Guardian* as a modern slavery regime, can also be seen in the other GCC countries, namely, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait. Similar arrangements are in place in Jordan and Lebanon (IOM 2017)¹⁴. Abuses usually start in the home country with recruitment and selection companies charging high application fees and promising salaries that in practice doesn't exist. Salary is offered according to nationality and not job function. The average price offered for a Nepalese to work in civil construction was US\$ 400 a month in 2014 (ITUC

2014), but once arriving at the place of work it is common to be surprised by new contracts that in practice do not reach half of that amount. In addition, these hirings are almost always based on a sponsorship relation where the employer is responsible for the travel, accommodation, and meals, which are subsequently deducted from the employee's salary. Reports presented by The Guardian (The Guardian 2022), indicate that the initial costs of hiring can exceed US\$ 2,000, thus creating a debt of one or two years for many workers. Those extra charges that workers pay is also used to fund kickback and other fraudulent payments to personnel of employing companies in countries of destination in exchange for the labor supply contracts and should be offset from financial remittances. To change the structural culture of corruption throughout the recruitment process would require complex solutions including coordinated legislative changes and policing in countries of origin and destination, replacing the employee-pays model currently adopted¹⁴.

Despite the recent legal changes, there have been reports of abuses that continue. Many have their passports confiscated and can only leave the country or change jobs with authorization and after having paid their debts to their employers (Amnesty International 2017). The requirement for this exit visa has even impacted soccer players in the past who have unilaterally tried to finish their contracts, being unable to leave the country for several months, according to a report in 2013 (France24 2013). For those less wealthy, however, leaving the job is not an option since the practice can lead to fines, deportation, banishment, prison, or even take them into the informal market, which in practice can be even worse (Ganji 2016). Though the government has already published some measures in order to change this structure, seeing its implementation is still challenging. According to reports from Amnesty International in 2016, in addition to the above issues, the poorly applied labor regulation also allows for terrible working and housing conditions (Amnesty International 2016). According to this report, it is common to see accommodations located close to construction sites in unsanitary conditions with no division of rooms or with about 15 workers per room. At the job sites, it is not very different with working hours that can exceed 60 hours per week (although the labor law specifies 8 hours per day for 6 days per week and a maximum of 2 hours overtime per day) and conditions of poor safety or deficient water supply. Also, according to investigations published by The Guardian Newspaper, sub-human living conditions (which is illegal under the labor accommodation regulations) are responsible for causing around 400 deaths at construction sites every year in the whole Qatar (The Guardian 2021a). These numbers are highly contested with official figures being cited as much lower with 34 deaths (Business & Human Rights 2020); thus depending on the source it is common to observe disagreement over the numbers of deaths and accidents. This specially occurs because the official cause of most deaths remains over the years without proper investigation.

However, with the proximity of the FIFA World Cup, the international media has shown increasing interest in reporting the human rights challenges found in the host countries, as already observed in previous cases such as Russia's LGBTQIA+ rights in 2018 or the working conditions of Bolivian and Haitian migrants in Brazil in 2014. In 2015, Human Rights Watch, which is supported by several press vehicles around the world, raised an international petition that gathered nearly 1 million signatures for the rights of migrants in Qatar. The movement that became known as "Free Qatar's Modern Slaves" called for

an end to the sponsorship system in addition to greater regulation and reforms in labor laws. Since 2016, after the petition drew the world's attention to the migrant cause, around 211 public allegations of labor abuses in Qatar have been registered, impacting at least 24,000 workers, mainly in civil construction (INews UK 2022). Among the main complaints, it is common to observe salary delays, an apparently common practice in the country but also typical in construction sectors around the world. However, due to the lack of reliable internal statistics responsible for measuring workers' health and well-being conditions, it is very likely that the reality of these numbers becomes even greater in a country where the practice of self-censorship is widespread.

But Qatar's issues are not just restricted to migrants. Another subject that receives great criticism is the way the country deals with the issue of homosexuality and gender equality. Created in 2003, the country's constitution designates an interpretation of Islamic law or Sharia, which establishes a set of norms inspired in the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, as the main source of legislation (Human Dignity Trust 2022). Also very present in other countries of Islamic religion in the region, flogging is used in Qatar for Muslims as a punishment for illicit sexual relations. In this context, same-sex relationships are criminalized and prohibited by law, with some limited evidence of the law being enforced in recent years (Qatar Tourism 2022). In addition, unmarried people of the opposite sex are prohibited from living together, and showing affection in public is not well seen, even among married people (Infobae 2021). Qatar's recent response to these issues within the context of the World Cup is that all fans will be welcomed and Qatar's culture should also be respected (Inside World Football 2022).

Although not as radical as its neighbor Saudi Arabia and behind other countries in the region such as the UAE, and though Qatar already presents female leaders (Emirates Women 2021), responsible for inspiring and promoting some changes, the country still has a long way in terms of gender equality and the inclusion of women in society. Interestingly, even though women only won the right to vote in 1999; in 2020, the female workforce participation was 57.35%. whereas world average was 49.61% (The Global Economy 2020). In terms of international sport participation, in 2012 female athletes competed for the country for the first time at the Olympic Games (London) whereas at the Asian Games in Jakarta in 2018, the country's delegation included 40 women, which demonstrates that the agenda has become increasingly inclusive over the past few years. While the practice of physical or professional activities by women remains a taboo in Qatar, as it is common to observe the need for family approval to do so; there are many opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport nowadays. Given the challenges of increasing access to women's participation in sport, the highest rates of sedentary lifestyles and illnesses arising from the lack of practicing physical exercise have been reported precisely in this gender (Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar 2020).

In addition to the sensitive issues described above, another point of tension between the government of Qatar and international organizations such as FIFA has been precisely the consumption of alcohol in the country. Although it is already possible to find alcoholic beverages in specific places such as hotels that receive international public, its consumption is prohibited among Muslims. Initial conversations indicate a possible flexibility in the consumption of alcohol in stadiums during the World Cup, but once

again the subject divides opinions between locals and the last-minute changes concern mainly companies that are sponsoring the event. The official speech of the local government is at the same time of flexibility and foreigner common sense. While they promise to turn a blind eye to some changes that in the long term would already be necessary to grow the interest of international tourism in the region, on the other hand it is already possible to observe advertisements preaching respect regarding local customs, as the requirement for the female audience to wear clothes that cover the shoulders and knees, for example (I love Qatar 2021).

In addition to these internal issues that affect foreigners in the country, the candidacy process and choice of Qatar for the 2022 World Cup was also troubled due to allegations of corruption and vote buying, accusing the country of having paid at least US\$ 1 million to the African Football Confederation in exchange for support (NYT 2021). Although not new with regard to the bidding for international mega sporting events since similar accusations were also made for the case of Brazil (2014) and Russia (2018), the scandal that hit FIFA in 2015 caused the resignation of then entity president Joseph Blatter in June of that year, just 4 days after being re-elected to what would be his fifth mandate. Episodes like these, highlighted by western media sources, that puts in question the real merits of Qatar as a host country have also contributed to the deterioration of the country's image and credibility internationally. In this sense, the role of the reforms promised by the local government in its domestic legislation directly related to the issue of human rights has gained increasing importance in order to overcome the negative perception that a good part of the western countries still maintain about the region.

4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The increase of the reputational risk due to human rights issues has led Qatar progressively to promote changes in its local legislation (Al Jazeera 2021). Especially since 2017, the country has in principle ended the Kafala system, terminate the exit visa requirement, give permission to change jobs without the consent of employers, in addition to creating a monthly minimum wage of US\$ 274,00 without discriminating against the type of nationality. Previously non-existent, a mechanism for resolving labor disputes was also created together with a fund for the payment guarantee of salaries as well fines to companies for late payment. Although these initiatives put Qatar ahead of other Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait in terms of labor rights (Figure 4), one of the biggest criticisms that the country receives is the effectiveness of these measures. Perhaps with the exception of the workers directly linked to the construction of the World Cup stadiums (at its maximum around 30,000 but down to 12,000), the reality that is observed is that these laws in practice still do not affect all others. For these other 2.35 million workers, what you see is the continuity of abuse, vulnerability, and exploitation (The Guardian 2021b).

In this context, Al-Nasr knows that while the World Cup and the transformations brought by QNV 2030 generate great opportunities for the country to attract investment and tourism, they are actually a "double-edged sword" since all this international visibility can bring challenges of equal size (Figure 5) for a society still very divided between modernism and tradition. With the World Cup approaching, it is known that there is a

window of visibility of a few months to be used since after the event ends, the world will turn its eyes to the next edition. With the increase of internal and external pressures, Al-Nasr finally succeeded to bring together important board members from top sponsor companies who are uncomfortable in supporting the Cup after so much social controversies reported by the international media. In order to avoid last minute changes in the sponsorship support of important brands such Adidas, Coca-Cola, Hyundai, Visa, Budweiser, InBev and Mc Donald's (Morning Consult 2022), Al-Nasr started showing to the directors the success cases that the Organizing Committee had already been seeing with their workers, who over the years have won thermal suits, have received a dedicated nutrition program, electronic medical records, family assistance, and other social welfare rights and care.

Al-Nasr argues that the legacy plan that is being developed by his staff will be capable of leaving a positive reputational legacy from the Cup, once these changes that have already proven to be possible on a smaller scale will now be accelerated and expanded to the whole country. However, as many of those changes go far beyond the scope of the Organizing Committee, Al-Nasr fears that he alone wouldn't be capable of convincing the companies that Qatar itself really is under a major positive change since the matter still divides opinions among the companies' members as part of them still feel that their brands are being negatively impacted with the recent negative visibility that Qatar and the Cup itself has been suffering. Al-Nasr knew that it wasn't just about the possibility of investments being withdrawn, but the positive endorsement that those brands gave to the event, especially with the western audience. With the Cup approaching and the risk of losing the support of major brands, something still needed to be done to ensure the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) security not only of the event, but also of the companies sponsoring it.

APPENDIX

Figure 1: **Doha Architecture**



Source: Vounajanela

Figure 2: Qatar Geolocation



Source: Google Maps

Figure 3: UN Sustainable Development Goals



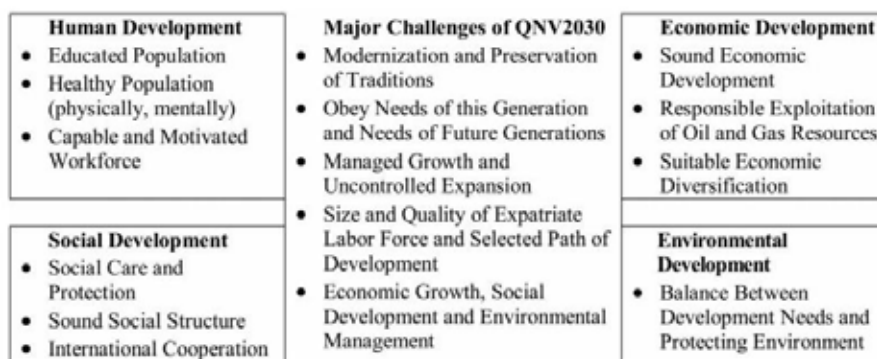
Source: United Nations

Figure 4: What Protections Do Kafala Workers Have?

	Join unions	Change job or quit without permission	Leave country without permission	Minimum wage	Domestic workers included under labor law	Standard contract for all workers
Bahrain	Yes	After 1 year	Yes	No	In some cases	No
Jordan	Yes	After 1 year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kuwait	Yes	After 1 year	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lithuania	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Oman	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Qatar	In some cases	Yes	In most cases	Yes	No	No
Saudi Arabia	No	In some cases	No	No	No	No
UAE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Source: Council on Foreign Relations 2021

Figure 5: Pillars and challenges of the Qatar National Vision 2030



Source: Scharfenort 2012

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TEACHING NOTES

Teaching objectives

The case puts the students in the position of Ahmed Al-Nasr, then chairman of Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, so that they can reflect on possible alternatives capable of ensuring environmental, social, and governance responsibility for the 2022 FIFA World Cup organization. Based on the analysis of the case, students are also invited to reflect on the capacity of mega sporting events to internationally promote the host destinations of the events, contributing to their soft power and increasing foreign tourist flows. At the end of the discussion, participants are expected to be able to (1) assess the aspects necessary to build an image of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) responsibility; (2) understand the impact of mega sporting events in building the host countries international image; and (3) identify and measure the impact and importance of critical success factors of the legacy left by international mega sporting events.

Target audience

The case is recommended for graduate and undergraduate students in their last years of college in courses in the field of Tourism, Sport Management, and Business. Its application is suitable for disciplines of international marketing, management of mega events, and human rights that want to deal with concepts such as ESG responsibility, destination image, and event planning.

Sources of information

Data collection took place between October 2021 and April 2022 through secondary sources of data such as scientific articles, consultancy reports, and journalistic material, and also through primary sources such as in-depth semi-structured interviews with researchers from the Arab world who were following the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar disclosures and its socio-economic impacts.

Suggested teaching plan

Assignment questions

- What are Qatar's main goals as host country for the 2022 FIFA World Cup?
- Which characteristics (similarities and differences) could you highlight from the event compared to other past Football World Cups?
- What are the main challenges and problems faced by the country and the organization of the event?
- In the place of the protagonist, what arguments would you use with the sponsoring companies in order to ensure the support and investments from international brands for the event?

Discussion plan and analysis

This teaching plan considers that there has been prior preparation of the students and was set up for a 2-hour class, as shown below:

- Beginning of class and dividing the team into small groups of 5 students (5 minutes)
- Discussion of assignment questions in small groups (30 minutes)
- Presentation of the case by the instructor (10 minutes)
- Discussion of the case in plenary (60 minutes)
- Closing (10 minutes)

Introduction

It is suggested to warm up the discussion by asking the students during the opening minutes to contribute to the contextualization of the case. At this point, the instructor can ask the class the following question:

Given the facts presented in the case, what are the main challenges and distrusts faced by Qatar as the host country of the 2022 World Cup?

At this point, it is suggested that the instructor take notes on the board. Some examples of contributions that could be said by the participants and that deserve to be highlighted are presented below.

Western mistrusts of Qatar at the 2022 FIFA World Cup
* Labor laws (low government regulation)
* Subhuman job conditions and close to slavery
* Wealth as great as social disparities
* Women's rights and gender equality
* Criminalization of Minorities such as LGBTQIA+ Communities
* Alcohol consumption
* Practical implementation challenges of the proposed reforms
* Criminalization of the migrant worker
* Culture shock vs. Too much flexibility

Source: prepared by the authors

As the main spaces are filled, the following question can be asked to the class:

Analysis

Discussion 1: Comment on how the ESG issues identified by FIFA and western countries can compromise Qatar's goals of hosting the World Cup?

Recently ESG responsibility has gained increasing importance among companies and governments around the world, mainly due to financial market concerns about sustainable investments (Sultana, Zulkifli and Zainal 2018). As a result, ESG issues become essential in risk analysis and investment decisions, putting strong pressure on companies, governments, and institutions operating in several markets of a globalized world. These adaptation needs by part of different stakeholders have transformed ESG from a compliance indicator to an increasingly essential requirement for those who want to operate in different markets and industries. In this way, ESG comes to stand as an evolution for the corporate sustainability in a world where international investment funds have increasingly adopted these criteria to regulate their operations (Matos 2020).

The term, created in 2004 by the Global Pact in partnership with the World Bank in an initiative called “Who Cares Wins,” arises from a provocation by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to the 50 largest financial institutions in the world about how to integrate environmental, social, and governance factors into the capital market (Jones 2012). Currently, the principles are already part of several reports such as Freshfield and PRI (Principles of Responsible Investment), which have directly affected the competitiveness of companies and organizations operating in local and international markets. In an increasingly volatile and complex business environment, complying with the ESG principles can be indicative of economic strength, cost efficiency, reputation, and organizational resilience (Coombes 2021).

As a result, ESG compliance by an organization or project ends up being crucial above all for the investor's decision-making process given that they are directly related to the SDGs of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (ElAlfy et al. 2020). Divided into 17 objectives (Figure 3), the UN SDGs are responsible precisely for gathering society's greatest vulnerabilities that need to be developed. Such vulnerabilities not only need to be closely observed, but also end up showing great opportunities for the sustainable development of companies and governments in the coming years.

While the environmental (E) refers to the practices of organizations for the environment taking into account their attitudes towards issues such as global warming, emission of polluting gases, waste management, among others, the social (S) is related to the responsibility of organizations towards the societies and communities they affect and refers to issues such as respect for human rights, labor laws, respect for differences (gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation), etc. In addition, governance (G) would be linked to policies, processes, and management orientations between companies and entities and may be related to topics such as anti-corruption policies, data transparency, respect for the various stakeholders of the network, among others. For a better visualization, Figure 1 shows each of the 17 SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda divided among the pillars of the ESG.

Figure 1: **SDG through the lens of ESG**



Source: Sætra (2021)

With this, it is encouraged that the instructor, at this time, presents a brief analysis of the case within the context of the ESG principles. As a suggestion, the board could be divided into three parts, one for the characteristics of environmental responsibility, another for social responsibility, and finally the governance aspects identified in the Qatar 2022 World Cup project. A second board sheet of the class could be put together from the students' contributions. Some points that could be raised by the participants and deserve to be highlighted are presented in the analysis below.

Environmental Responsibility Aspects (E): Although they are not the focus of the case, some aspects can be raised such as the high dependence of the Qatari economy on the fossil fuel industry such as oil & gas, which are highly polluting to the atmosphere. The observance of the model's unsustainability in the long term due to a scenario of scarcity of reserves, however, can be seen as a strategy of positive economic diversification in order to reduce the country's dependence on these resources. On the other hand, the small number of new stadiums compared to previous editions of the event combined with adopting temporary structures that can be demobilized along with the short distance between the few host cities represent a positive advance in the impact of the World Cup structures on the environment that surrounds them.

Social Responsibility Aspects (S): Perhaps one of the most critical aspects of the project is the social issue, which ends up vilifying the organization of the World Cup, proving to be a structural problem in Qatar. The high dependence and at the same time criminalization of the migrant worker allied to a work system with low State regulation end up contributing to sub-human employment practices in conditions sometimes analogous to slavery. There is also a great cultural taboo on the role of women in society and in sport itself as they often need permission from the family to work or practice physical activities. Qatar has made great strides towards gender equality, and while the World Cup has also served as a catalyst for increasing participation by women and girls in sport; this aspect tends to be overlooked due to the massive focus on the migrant labor issue by Western media in particular. The criminalization of minorities and anti-gay laws

also end up contributing to the distrust of investors and the Western public in general despite the Government reiterating that all are welcome to Qatar.

Governance Aspects (G): The governance of the event started out tarnished precisely with the accusation of corruption involving the Qatar candidacy process. The episode was even one of those responsible for the resignation of former FIFA President Joseph Blatter. In addition, the government of Qatar has struggled to implement changes to the country's labor laws and structures, which are currently responsible for contributing to human rights violations. Like other Middle Eastern countries, Qatar tends to be bureaucratic with rules and laws that are not very well defined or applied. With regard to the delivery schedule of the World Cup project, however, the high availability of financial resources for being one of the richest countries in the world are reflected in the schedules that could be met with some comfort, and several months before the competition starting date many of the structures were already completed and being tested.

In view of this analysis, it is found that the 2022 Qatar World Cup project ends up presenting several challenges with regard to ESG pillars. Although the 2030 country's objectives seek to follow some of the sustainable development indicators of the UN 2030 Agenda, once again some inconsistencies can be observed in the country's alignment with objectives 1 (poverty eradication), 3 (health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent employment and economic growth), 10 (reduction of inequalities), and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), especially if we look at it from the point of view of 90% migrant resident population. Such issues, when analyzed, bring several additional challenges to the protagonist Al-Nasr, who suffers pressure from the international community and also from top foreign brands sponsoring the event.

After completing this first stage of the discussion, it is suggested that the instructor introduce a second discussion question to the class, as presented below:

Discussion 2: How would a possible withdrawal of sponsorship and support from major international brands to the event affect the intangible legacies left by the cup, especially with regard to promoting the country's destination image?

There are several expected benefits that countries and regions seek to achieve by hosting international sporting mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup. Such expectations can range from the most tangible ones such as economic growth, development of local infrastructure, and job creation to intangible legacies such as the accumulation of know-how in managing large-scale events, national pride, and promoting the country's image as a destination (Cashman 2010). Specifically on promoting the destination's image, despite being a difficult indicator to measure, especially when perceived by the international public, if well used, it can have indirect consequences for several other economic gains, for example by the increase in the flow of international tourists or the better insertion of national products in foreign markets (Kim and Morrison 2005).

Some studies have shown (Agha, Fairley and Gibson 2012) that in the case of mega events, most of the economic returns occur not during or immediately after the event, but in the long term from the good use of intangible legacies such as those mentioned above,

and that end up being able to boost the perception of external stakeholders regarding the country's international marketing, product brands, and national companies. However, it is important to pay attention to the quality of the legacy left since despite the usual optimism that exists in winning the World Cup bid, for example, recent editions have shown that the legacy of these investments, if not well planned, can leave more negative than positive marks (Russo and Figueira 2022).

The construction of a strong country destination image from an international mega sporting event will, therefore, be the result of a cognitive process similar to building a brand of products or services in the consumer's mind (Anderson 1983). In this way, physical, emotional, social, organizational, and environmental attributes presented by the event will be responsible for portraying a greater or lesser visit inclination by the tourist or spectator (Kaplanidou 2010). In the case of the FIFA World Cup, as it is a recurring and itinerant event, past experiences of the same event in other countries will end up contributing, together with the local aspects presented by Qatar in 2022, to the construction of a positive or negative destination image to tourists, companies, or foreign countries.

In order to better assess the impact on the country destination image of a mega sporting event, Kim, Kang and Kin (2014) proposed a theoretical framework that through the behavior of 7 different variables will determine the greater or lesser probability of visiting or purchasing a product or service originating from that country. The variables presented by the model are: Urbanization (Modernity and Infrastructure), Nature (Scenery and Beauty), Culture (Level of Cultural Heritage), Value (Cost x Benefit of the Visit), Security (Public, Sanitary), Climate (Pleasant x Extreme), and Convenience (Tourist Support Services). In order to assess the potential of the Qatar 2022 destination image, students are once again invited to contribute to each of the 7 variables presented above. A suggested analysis is given below:

Urbanization: As the centerpiece being the 2022 World Cup, Qatar has promoted from its 2030 vision important urban interventions throughout the country, taking the capital Doha to a new level of city, bringing the destination closer to other locations observed in the Middle East like Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The construction of a new port, airport, train lines, and highways in the three host cities of the Cup and throughout the country can be highlighted.

Nature: While the desert offers an array of recreational activities, overnight Bedouin-styled camps and undulating sand dunes which is embedded in Qatari culture; with Qatar being a relatively unknown tourist destination, the dry landscapes are not perceived to offer great tourist attractions from this point of view, requiring that this variable be compensated by other aspects. Large natural oil and gas reserves, however, bring great availability of resources and possibilities for the economic and social development of the region; including developing its tourism product offering even further.

Culture: It is a country with a recent history as it only became independent in 1971. Before that it received great influence from the British Empire and also from the Ottomans. Qatar has a rich culture, however the high number of migrants (about 90% of

the population) brings additional challenges for the preservation and dissemination of Qatari culture and values.

Value: Even for the Middle East, Qatar is considered a luxury destination, a position that has been reaffirmed with the development of an entire hotel chain based on the 4 and 5 star categories. The relatively low natural attractions make the tourism of experience one of the few options. Experiences that privilege exclusivity, high level of service, and luxury.

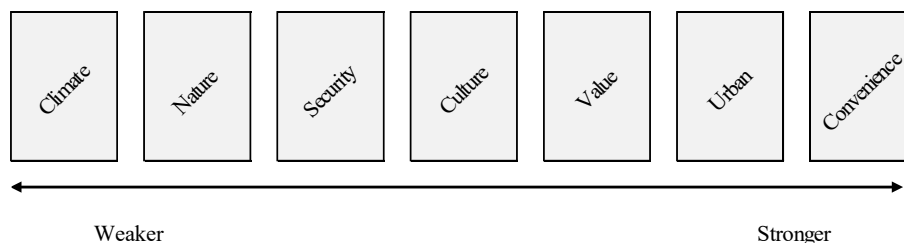
Climate: The country's climate imposes several challenges both to traditional and event tourism. For the first time we saw the change of the period of year that the World Cup commonly takes place in order to escape from the high temperatures of the country's summer. The impact of this change on broadcasting results, one of the event's biggest revenues, is still unclear. On the other hand, large investments have been made to climatize squares and stadiums, creating a milestone for the sport with the first air-conditioned stadiums in the world.

Safety: Despite being considered a relatively safe destination within the Middle East, the small territory of Qatar is situated in one of the greatest region of tension in the world. The country has taken diplomacy as a strategy in a perception of national security guaranteed through *soft power*. The troubled relations with some neighbors and the cultural shock of hosting a typically Western event, however, makes the terrorist threat a constant. In addition, the world is coming out of one of the biggest pandemics in its history with health security protocols that still affect matches and the presence of the public in stadiums.

Convenience: As part of the proposal to bet on tourism of experience through big sectoral and sporting events, several structures of convenience and tourist support have been developed such as airports, hotels, and restaurants, which will certainly remain as a legacy after the Cup. With this, the 2022 FIFA World Cup becomes the central milestone of the proposed transformations by the Qatar 2030 Vision.

After this stage of the discussion, it is suggested that the students point out each of the variables as having the greatest positive or negative influence on the Qatar's image in order to generate a scale of characteristics of the destination. This kind of organization, from the weakest to the strongest attribute, could bring indications on the possible legacy points left by the event for Qatar's image, as well as weaknesses that still need to be worked on. A suggestion of how this scale could look on the board is presented below:

Figure 2: Strengths of the Qatar 2022 Destination Image Variables



Source: prepared by the authors

After that, the suggested analysis of the teaching case is concluded, and the instructor can move on to the final stage, as suggested below.

Closing

At the end, the instructor can also end with a poll by asking the participants to put themselves once again in the role of the protagonist, as suggested:

How do you see the effectiveness of Qatar's attitude and other countries in the Middle East in using sport and events as a strategic mechanism for economic diversification capable of boosting local tourism industries?

At the closing moment of freer contributions, it is suggested to encourage a quick debate that brings together different perspectives (positive x negative) or (effective x ineffective) as could be presented by the participants.

Disclosure

Some of the facts as well as the protagonists presented in the case are fictitious and were created only for didactic purposes. Thus, the opinions and dilemmas described during the text do not necessarily represent the official position of the organizations cited.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors do not have any conflict of interest to declare, as well didn't received any financial support in the preparation of this manuscript.

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